Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative

Submitted to:
Idaho Federal Lands Task Force Working Group

Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative

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INTRODUCTION

The Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative brings together a group of people from all backgrounds to cooperatively provide a stewardship approach for improving conditions on federal lands. The "Collaborative Group" will provide direction for managing the ecological, social, and economic needs on portions of the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests. The Collaborative Group will guide the management of elk recovery efforts by restoring this portion of the Clearwater River Basin to its natural historical conditions. Specifically, the goal is to restore a higher percentage of early- and late-succession stages than currently exists. The Collaborative Group will include a wide range of commodity, environmental, recreational, fish and wildlife, Native American, and local government interests. The group will develop five- and one-year plans for the management of the project area. It will be the responsibility of the Collaborative Group to determine management objectives and to involve the public in defining the goals of the two national forests during the pilot project period.

Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative

Area: 2.7 million acres; parts of the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests

Goal: Restore habitat for elk and other key indicator species consistent with social objectives and historical conditions.

Present management activities have moved away from active management of the land base. These decisions have led to changes in the forest vegetation. The result has been an increase in fire hazard and reduction in wildlife habitat for a number of key wildlife indicator species. The management project described in this document (Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative) addresses a new method of managing federal lands through collaboration, public involvement, and sound ecological practices. This outcome-based approach addresses ecological restoration and a land stewardship ethic that promotes ecological health and local community involvement. The overall goals for implementing this collaborative method would be to evaluate and closely monitor the activities and outcomes as compared to other forests or adjacent lands that are being managed under the existing rules and regulations.

National Forest Service budgets are declining, putting more strain on the ability of the Forest Service staff to maintain and restore the forest ecosystem. Local community stability has been disrupted due to the uncertainty of forest management. As a result of lack of activity on the ground, continual decline in early successional habitat is reducing the habitat for key wildlife species and threatening recreational and scenic values. The decline in early successional habitat and increased fuel loading has intensified wildfires as seen in the 2000 fire season. The number of Rocky Mountain elk, and other key indicator species, in the Clearwater drainage has recently dropped by 50 percent and are continuing to decline. Much of the decline is due to the lack of habitat in the forest. In the past, nationwide, there has been a focused approach to legislating each specific resource issue instead of looking at the entire forest ecosystem. Each individual resource

has its own set of laws and with new regulations emerging concerning heritage resources and planning, the situation will continue to become more complex. The debate should not be on each individual subject, but focused toward the health of the entire ecosystem and developing a plan to meet the ecological diversity and long-term sustainability of the forest. Today, groups that choose to halt management activities are not required to participate in the planning processes that provide cooperation in caring for the land. They participate only at a point to disrupt or delay stewardship activities, resulting in a tremendous amount of time and money being spent by all parties involved with not much "being accomplished".

Cumbersome and overwhelming rules and regulations that inhibit the chance to implement meaningful ecosystem-wide restoration projects need to be considered. If projects in our watersheds, such as wildlife habitat improvements, transportation system upgrades, and recreational improvements are not implemented, the public, wildlife, and local communities will suffer. In addition, the cost to everyone will be great, both in fire suppression expense and the loss in scenic values.

Many new areas of the forest are overstocked with too many trees. This overcrowded condition weakens the trees through competition for light, moisture, and nutrients. Stressed trees are more susceptible to insects and disease, and mortality is high. The dead and dying timber sets the stage for a catastrophic wildfire event that will kill all the trees, damage soils, and silt waterways. This pilot project proposes to evaluate, under new authorization, a method of management that emphasizes the ecosystem without the numerous conflicting rules that now stifle land management agencies.

The monitoring process will include measuring the resource benefits that the public and local communities receive. Each forest tracks accomplishments through a monitoring and evaluation reporting system. Many more projects can be accomplished through increased management efficiencies, streamlining laws, and increasing revenues. These accomplishments will continue to be reported in the monitoring report.

The Forest Service has produced land assessment documents that identify the restoration needs and the many forest health issues. These documents will guide the activities. The pilot project can test the collaborative decision-making process and evaluate its effectiveness as a method of public land management. It will also be a test ground for a set of management practices authorized by law that implement activities to improve and enhance the ecosystem. Once the pilot project has been implemented for a 10 to 15 year period, its accomplishments can be evaluated through monitoring and can be compared to other areas within the Forest Service. It can then be determined whether the results have provided more benefits, improved ecological sustainability, and whether it is more effective in meeting the goals of the resource and the public.

The strategies needed to improve our ecosystems and direct management of the Collaborative would include all the following considerations:

- ? Direct vegetative management towards the natural range of variability, which provides for a more sustainable ecosystem.
- ? Restore habitat for steelhead, salmon, and bull trout through watershed restoration so species can fully utilize the aquatic habitat in the forest.
- ? Manage vegetation and direct silvicultural activities to restore ponderosa pine, western white pine, whitebark pine and western larch while minimizing the risk of unnaturally severe fires.
- ? Evaluate and create habitat for lynx and other listed threatened or endangered species through implementation of ecological sound methods, and careful logging practices that would minimize impacts on the land and provide an economical means of thinning overstocked stands and improving critical habitat.
- ? Use prescribed fire to reduce fuel loads, lower wildfire risk, and improve wildlife habitat.
- ? Manage for species, age classes and appropriate habitats through harvesting methods that encourage long-term protection of soil, land, and water resources.
- ? Improve the efficiency and increase the net social benefits of natural forest management through the collaborative process with public involvement and cooperation.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative project includes both the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests located in North Central Idaho. In the Clearwater National Forest, the area specifically identified is the North Fork, Powell, and Lochsa Ranger Districts, which are part of the Clearwater Basin. This area includes all the major watersheds and totals approximately 1,679,000 acres of national forest on the Clearwater National Forest. Of that total, 988,000 acres are designated as inventoried roadless areas.

The Nez Perce National Forest area includes the Red River, Moose Creek, and Clearwater Ranger Districts, which are the major drainages of the South Fork Clearwater River and Selway River, which also drain into the Clearwater Basin. This area totals approximately 1,040,000 acres of National Forest on the Nez Perce National Forest. Of that total, 414,000 acres are designated as inventoried roadless areas.

In total, the pilot project in the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests consists of approximately 2,719,000 million acres, which includes approximately 1,402,000 acres of roadless area. The area has a diversity of plant communities, recreational uses, wildlife, watershed, and restoration opportunities. Active management of roadless areas will not necessarily occur within the pilot project area but will not be precluded. The degree and nature of management in the roadless areas will be discussed under the collaborative structure of the project. The management of the potential project area for treatment acres or revenues does not include active management in the roadless areas.

The Clearwater Basin Stewardship Project area is within the ceded area of the Nez Perce Tribe. The forest area has many native foods, fishery issues, and spiritual gathering locations that are important to the Native American culture. The pilot project intent is to consult and coordinate activities with the Native American communities.

Scope

The purpose of the Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative is to restore the Clearwater Basin area elk herds and the native vegetation to historical conditions. Historically, these forests had a higher percentage of area in early successional stages (i.e. seral tree species such as western larch and western white pine on a more open landscape) and late successional stands (characterized by mature older age classes in forest stands). Both stages are significantly less represented today than historically found in these areas. This reduction has resulted in many areas growing into the mid-successional stage (younger dense stands of 16" to 25" diameter trees) with a reduced number of forage plants for big game and other wildlife that are dependent on early successional vegetation. The reduction in the elk population and loss of native vegetation is a result of the loss of the early successional stages. The historical range of variability is a term used to identify the range of certain plant species and vegetative stages that were present in "pre-settlement" time.

As an example the following graph (next page) depicts the historical range of variability and the existing size classes of timber for the Breaklands of the South Fork and main Salmon Rivers with Douglas-fir and dry grand fir habitat types in the Nez Perce National Forest. The current condition is outside the range of historical variability for most of the size classes. The graph shows that the current range for the younger age classes is below the low range and the 16"-25" size class is above the high range. The recommendations identified by the Forest Service to restore and improve these areas will include focusing on species diversity, age class distribution, abundance of plant and animal species, watershed condition, water quality, transportation systems, and human uses and trends in the forest.

Opening up the forest provides for more natural regeneration, and through planting the desired species, more seedling/sapling and pole-size trees can be brought up to the natural range of variability. Implementing thinning throughout the overstocked stands provides more sunlight to the forest floor, encouraging more herbaceous growth for wildlife and helping to keep wildfires on the ground, reducing damage to the forest. Thinning maintains the larger trees for forest cover and regeneration. These ecological restoration activities provide opportunities to return the ecosystem to its natural historical range. The thinning of the overstocked stands also provides an opportunity to reduce the high fuel loading after which prescribed fire can be used safely and effectively in restoring the sites.

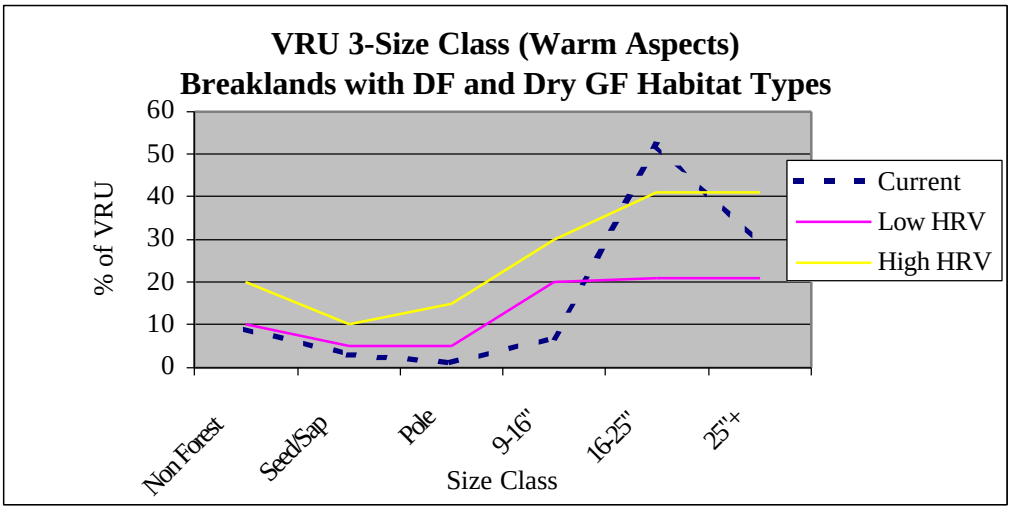


TABLE 1 (Taken from Stewards of the Nez Perce Forest, Vegetation Group, April 2000)

Magnitude of the Proposal

The Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests are home to many fish and wildlife species. As habitat changes due to natural and man caused disturbances, so does the wildlife use and its numbers. The elk and other species that use the early successional habitat of this area are indicators of the habitat changes. Elk numbers have dropped by 50 percent in the past 20 years and continue to decline in response to habitat changes.

The 2.7 million acre area has a history of change. Archaeological evidence collected from digs in the area indicates that elk have inhabited the Clearwater and Selway River basins for over 10,000 years.

Elk numbers in the state dropped in the 1860's as a result of the discovery of gold in the area. With no hunting restrictions, many elk were killed for food. The extensive wildfires between 1910 and 1934 removed huge areas of forest canopy. Following these fires the grasses, forbs, shrubs, and young forests covered the burned areas creating a tremendous amount of forage resulting in the elk population rebounding. [1]

Also around 1910, white pine blister rust, a non-native disease from Europe was introduced into the United States. The disease has killed most of the remaining white pine, and these forests were replaced by stands of grand fir and Douglas-fir that are much more susceptible to wildfire and disease.

In the 1940's fire suppression techniques greatly improved. Keeping fire out of the ecosystem allowed the stands of timber to mature so that the trees over-shadowed the ground vegetation and eliminated grasses, forbs, and shrubs essential for elk forage. On the Nez Perce National Forest, fire frequency has decreased to less than 10% of its historical occurrence. Fires once affected almost 6,000 acres per year before 1930; since then, fires have only burned about 400 acres annually. The complex ecological, political,

and social changes coinciding during this period also affected the timber supply from the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests.

The Forest Service has identified the age-class distribution on the suitable forest lands and found that there are many acres in the 120 to 140 year-old age classes and not enough acres in the younger age classes (11 to 50 years old). A more even distribution of 170 year-old plus timber is also necessary to provide a balance of species, age classes, and forest cover types. The data also shows that there is a high percent of Douglas-fir and grand fir, which are in the 16" to 25" diameter class. These species and diameter class are at significantly higher numbers than the Historical Range of Variability would normally allow (see Table #1 on page 6). These conditions contribute to the higher fuel loading and potential for intensive wildfires that cause long-term damage to the soil and water quality in these areas. The increase of Douglas-fir and grand fir also shade out the grasses and forbs, reducing habitat for elk and other wildlife. An abundance of this heavy timber type structure shifts the forest towards Douglas-fir and grand fir types and away from the ponderosa and western white pine types, thus resulting in the loss of the seral type forest and reducing the habitat for species requiring the early-seral forest type.

Presently, prescribed fire and harvesting activities projected to maintain or improve wildlife habitat and big game winter range on the Nez Perce National Forest, as described in the current Forest Plan, are 60 percent below the desired Forest Service goal (Eleventh Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report, Fiscal Year 1998). As each year passes, more habitat is changing to a late seral condition, and the overall habitat used by key species is being reduced.

Community

In the Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative area, there are seven communities which include Elk City, Grangeville, Kooskia, Kamiah, Orofino, Pierce, and Weippe. Lapwai, which is the headquarters for the Nez Perce Tribe, is located outside of the immediate area; however, many tribal members live in these communities. Kooskia, Kamiah, and Orofino are located on the reservation within the pilot area. The employment of Elk City, Pierce, and Weippe is directly tied to the forest activities, such as logging and lumber manufacture. Grangeville, Kooskia, Kamiah, and Orofino range from 15% logging and sawmill employment to 5% at Grangeville. Other employment opportunities include agriculture and agricultural services, construction, transportation, trade, finance, insurance, real estate, motels, medical and social services, and local, state, and federal government employment.

These communities have maintained an economic and social stability during the past 50 years involving primarily federal timber, but also state and private. The history of Elk City as an example surrounds Shearer Lumber Company. This mill and its connection with the community depicts the situation that is common among all these communities.

Shearer Lumber Company mill opened forty years ago and is one of the largest employers in this area with 100 mill workers and another 40 employed by the associated logging and trucking contractors. Since 1990, timber sales have dropped to almost a two thirds reduction. The reduction has been both predictable and drastic with mills closing in Grangeville, Whitebird, Riggins, Juliaetta, and Craigmont, with a loss of 479 jobs from 1994 to 1996. These communities located within the pilot area are directly impacted by the policies and management direction of federal lands. The existing facilities are operating due to the increased use of the private timber, which is being substituted for the reduced availability. This places an increased demand for private timber production while millions of board feet are dying annually on the adjacent national forests due to insects, wildfire, disease, and lack of good stewardship practices.

Economy

The economies of the communities in the study area are diverse in that not all local residents work in the forest, but the businesses, whether accounting, grocery stores, restaurants or recreational business, are all tied to the National Forest lands that surround these communities. Three areas of the economic base that are directly tied to the National Forest for these communities include: 1) jobs generated through logging and mill operations; 2) guiding for recreation, such as fishing, rafting, and hunting; 3) jobs to conduct restoration work in watersheds and wildlife habitat. This work is directly generated from the federal land ownership around these communities. Flowing from these activities is the income that fuels the businesses of the area. Twenty-five percent of the federal receipts from timber sales on the national forests has supported these communities' schools and roads. These revenues have been reduced by over 50% over the past decade, further reducing the ability of local governments to supply basic services in education and roads in these counties.

Environment

The Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forest are heavily forested with precipitation ranging from 30 to over 50 inches annually. The past wildfires in the area have formed a mosaic pattern of forest vegetation throughout the area.

The three main rivers dissecting the proposed areas include the North Fork Clearwater, South Fork Clearwater and the Selway River. These drainages have high recreational use with beautiful scenery, fishing, and hiking opportunities**.** On the Clearwater National Forest, approximately 988,000 acres of the 1,679,000 acre area was inventoried during RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation) with the survey beginning in 1977. Most of these areas have had little to no development since that analysis.

The Nez Perce National Forest (Red River, Moose Creek, and Clearwater Districts) includes approximately 1,040,000 acres, with 414,000 acres designated as roadless. The South Fork Clearwater River landscape assessment developed by the Forest Service has area management themes that include vegetation, wildlife, aquatics,

and recreation. The vegetative pattern is to restore early seral species and conserve scenic integrity on a portion of the geographic areas or Ecological Reporting Units as identified by the Forest Service. There are areas identified for vegetative management including specific changes in tree species composition, wildlife habitat improvements, roads, and recreational needs. The aquatic theme is to restore aquatic processes within the forest.

The Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative proposes to demonstrate ecosystem management needs as identified by the Clearwater National Forest document, North Fork Big Game Habitat Restoration on a Watershed Scale Assessment (BHROWS) August 16, 1999, and the Nez Perce National Forest document, South Fork Clearwater River Landscape Assessment, March 1998, as it applies to the pilot project areas. The activities include vegetative management, watershed restoration, wildlife habitat, and scenic quality within the proposed areas. The documents specifically address:

- ? Improve watershed conditions important for spawning steelhead or Chinook salmon and help restore bull trout populations
- ? Improve wildlife habitat with the use of prescribed fire and logging as a disturbance to restore early successional stages and the corresponding early seral species such as white pine and larch. Use disturbance to treat large areas of lodgepole pine, which are providing little to no habitat and are increasingly a wildfire hazard
- ? Remove roads no longer needed for access.
- ? Improve habitat for late successional species and maintain older age classes near historical levels
- ? Provide for continued recreational uses and maintain and improve the scenic quality of the area
- ? Provide a source of timber to support local economies and create new jobs within communities in watershed restoration and wildlife habitat enhancement work

PILOT PROJECT DETAILS

Assumptions in the Pilot Project Analysis

The collaborative group process is to guide the management of the Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative project. Basic assumptions are that the collaborative group be made up of a range of fish, wildlife, commodity, environmental, recreational, range, and local government interests. A group of no more than 15 is a practical number, and elected officials of the state will provide a significant role in identifying this group. These individuals should demonstrate an interest to work collaboratively regardless of their personal affiliations. Decisions within the collaborative group would be by consensus of the members. In the event consensus cannot be reached, a decision could be by a majority vote of the members.

The forest supervisors would be responsible for implementing the plan and for any of the technical support necessary for its development. The Forest Service will use

all information and data available from the universities, industry, state, and the Forest Service's own data base to develop the five-year and one-year plans.

The development of a new five-year plan will take some time for the collaborative group. Until the new plan is complete, the existing land management plans, policies and legal restrictions will remain in place. Once the new plan is complete and approved through the NEPA process, it will replace the existing Forest Plan. The roadless issue and treatment of these lands within the Clearwater Basin Stewardship project area will be addressed after the group is established. The collaborative group can engage in discussions and decisions surrounding these areas within the project area.

Collaborative Stewardship Component

The collaborative process is an effort to resolve difficult natural resource issues on portions of the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests. In the proposed legislation, the decision-making process will be established to facilitate activities and provide the best long-term sustainable practices in the field (see Table #4-Comparisons of Projects). Mandatory time limits for completion of the planning and appeals processes are proposed and established to keep the process in motion. Legislation directs the Forest Supervisor to implement decisions for management.

The five-year plan would examine alternatives for land allocations and meeting local economic and environmental needs. This plan would be based on a sound inventory and would be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement.

The one-year plan would designate the specific on-the-ground projects designed to meet the five-year plan objectives for the coming 12-month period. An Environmental Assessment would accompany it.

Administrative appeals will be allowed during the two planning processes. The collaborative group will manage appeals. Appeals, however, will be restricted to those individuals or organizations that have contributed to and are involved in the public input process that exists during the development of the five- and one-year plans.

Administrative appeals would not be allowed at the project level, although informal efforts to resolve project-specific concerns with the on-the-ground manager would be encouraged.

Projects that are not listed on the one-year plan, but which for some reason the on-the-ground manager proposes to accomplish in a particular year, would have to be preceded by an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment, and would be subject to the same public involvement requirements and administrative appeal processes as those in the planning process.

In order for the Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative to be successful, Congress must establish mandatory time limits for completion of the planning and appeal

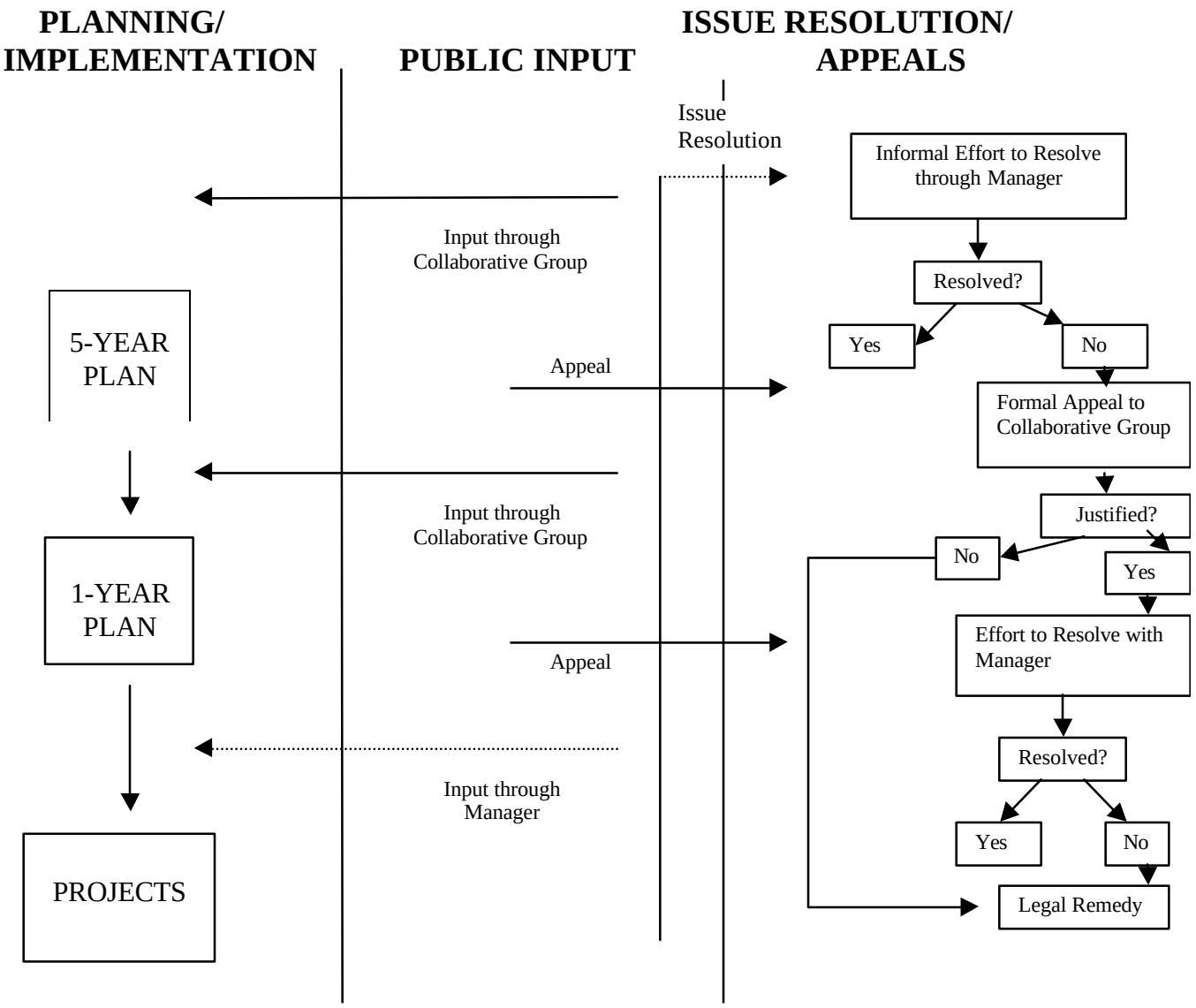
processes described (see Table #4-Comparisons of Projects). Without time limits, one or more members of the group may not participate in good faith and can cause the effort to fail through delay. Working toward consensus from such a diverse group as the Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative without time limits will foster inactivity. When decisions cannot be agreed on, they could be decided by a majority vote. This makes balancing the interests in the group even more critical. Without a majority vote, one group of interests could easily override the desires of others, negating the collaborative process.

The Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative management structure would not change the current Forest Service structure. The Forest Supervisor would be the individual responsible for administering on-the-ground activities within the overall directions of the forest plan. The Collaborative Group would not have supervisory authority over the Forest Supervisor, but once the forest collaborative plan was in place, the group would serve as a monitoring unit to ensure that on-the-ground activities were in fact consistent with the plan objectives.

It is important, however, that the Forest Supervisor be vested with sufficient authority to make decisions and effect their implementation within the broad direction of the forest collaborative plan. The authority granted to the Forest Supervisor must be to make these decisions within the appropriate legal limits without being overruled by officials at the regional or national level. Collaboration cannot work otherwise.

The collaborative process is time consuming, and all interested communities that use the National Forest must be involved to make this effort worthwhile. The public input process is available to all those who are interested in the activities of the forest. It is important that the 15 member Collaborative Board reviews the management on the forest, and the board must insure that the public input process is available to all interested communities. The Collaborative Group function is to determine the management goals, monitor activities, and assess implementation. The pilot project will be monitored and evaluated during implementation and following the project. The success of a land stewardship process like this collaborative can be an example of ecosystem-based management, while providing the benefits of long-term forest diversity and stability in public land management.

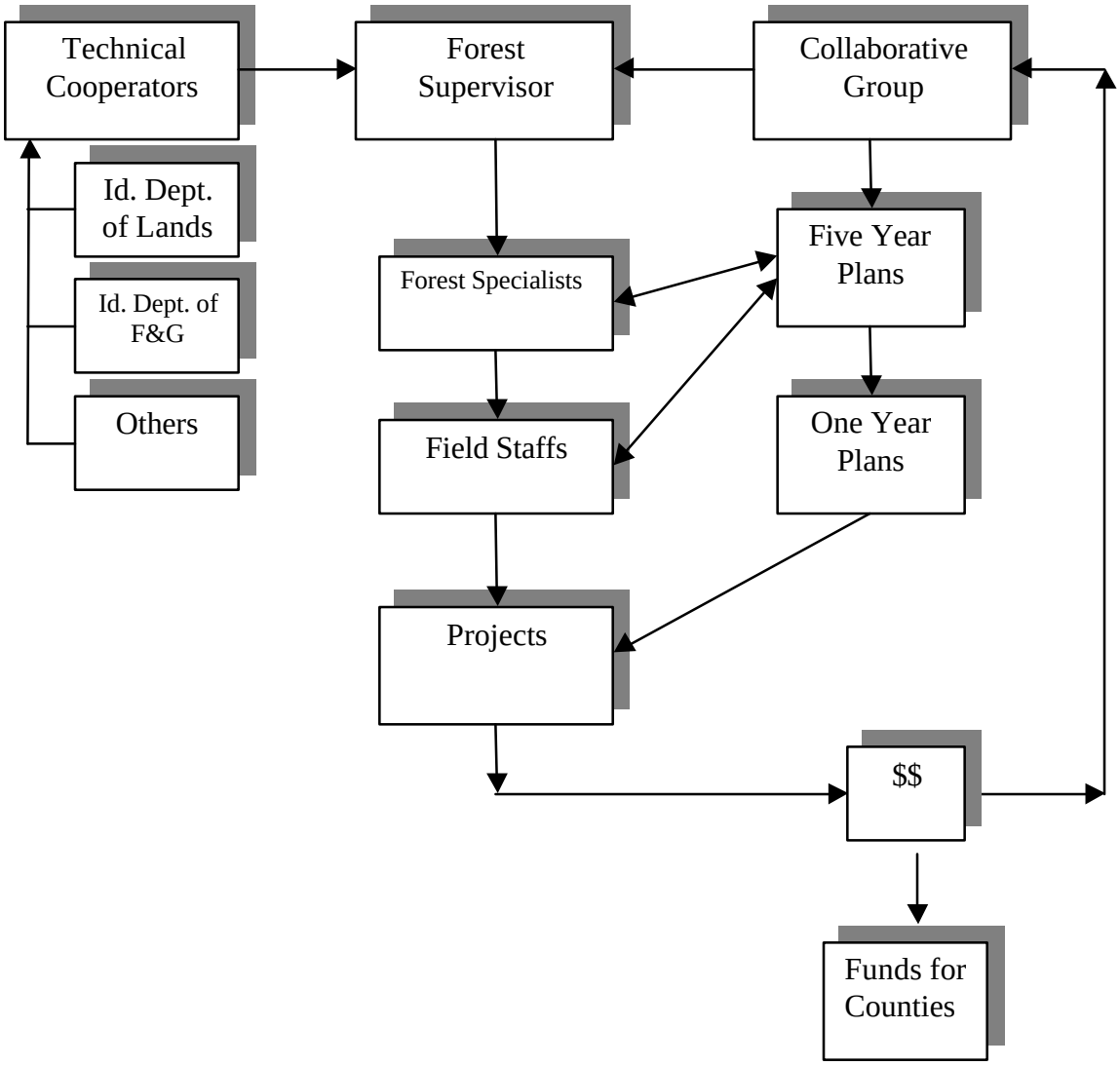
COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS[?]



The Collaborative Group will have access to technical review cooperators such as the Idaho Department of Lands, Department Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Fish and Game, universities and others. The Forest Supervisor, the Forest Specialist and field staff provide additional support input into the five-year and one-year plans.

[?] New Approaches for Managing Federally Administered Lands, July 1998

Clearwater Basin Elk Collaborative



Public Participation

Public participation under the collaborative process begins with public input into the five-year and one-year plans. The Collaborative Group, together with the Forest Specialists and field staff, will develop five-year and one-year plans for approval.

The collaborative pilot project planning process will test the possibilities and limits of collaboration. It will benefit from existing Forest Service expertise as a useful check of the group expectations and will maintain federal agency management and expertise in place during implementation. This will pave the way for more on-the-ground collaborative management groups.

The Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative, as envisioned in the pilot project, meets objectives for ecosystem-based management. An Act of Congress, as proposed, would establish the objectives of the group. Those objectives would include formalized plans and stabilized budgets. Managers and local communities would benefit from ecological stability in decision-making and on-the-ground fish, water, and wildlife accomplishments.

Fiscal Processes

Revenues generated from the Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative project can support the operations of the Forest Ranger Districts. Appropriations from the National Treasury will be necessary to start the pilot projects and may fully support the operations once the projects are implemented. Funds generated from the pilot project activities will be managed by the Collaborative group and used to meet resource needs and to implement watershed restoration, wildlife habitat enhancement and recreational uses. Funds can be proportioned to local governments roads and/or as a contingency fund for other activities. The Collaborative Group and the Forest Supervisor will determine annually the appropriate levels of funding to implement activities.

It is critical that Congress maintain the revenue generated by the operation of the Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative project as a discrete account during the pilot project period. It will not be possible to meet the functional objective of stabilizing budgets without that provision.

REVENUE AND EXPENSE SUMMARIES

Existing Proforma
Clearwater National Forest (North Fork, Lochsa, and Powell Ranger Districts)

Revenues generated from land management operations
1997-1999 Average Treatment Acres and Values

Timberland 800 acres treated	$1,704,000	
Recreation Fees	$96,763	
Grazing fees	---	
TOTAL	$1,800,763	$1,800,763

Expense for Operations 1999

Timberlands		
Fire	$675,700	
Planning	$31,000	
Timber Sales	$2,114,700	
Reforestation	$756,700	
Recreation	$595,600	
Minerals	$25,000	
Grazing	$26,100	
Heritage Resources	$25,400	
Wildlife	$258,600	
Noxious Weed Control*	$47,000	
Soil & Water	$179,000	
Road Obliteration	$589,600	
Administration/Misc	$2,547,600	
TOTAL	$7,872,000	($7,872,000)

Total revenues available less expense for operations	($6,071,237)

*Noxious weed control is conducted on approx. 1150 acres annually

Recreation fee sources are generated from outfitter and guide and camping fees. There is little to no grazing income on these Ranger Districts. There is little mineral income on these Ranger Districts. The Clearwater National Forest Budget has been reduced by approximately $1,100,000 since 1997. Road obliteration is the most active and costly part of the watershed restoration program on the national forest today.

Potential Pilot Revenue and Expense Summaries

Clearwater National Forest (North Fork, Lochsa, and Powell Ranger Districts)

Revenues generated from land management operations

PILOT Proforma

Timberland 7,843 acres treated*	$11,360,000	
Recreation Fees	$96,763	
Grazing fees	---	
TOTAL	$11,456,763	$11,456,763

Expense for Operations North Fork Ranger District 1999

Timberlands		
Fire	$675,700	
Planning	$31,000	
Timber Sales	$2,114,700	
Reforestation	$756,700	
Recreation	$595,600	
Minerals	$25,000	
Grazing	$26,100	
Heritage Resources	$25,400	
Wildlife	$258,600	
Noxious Weed Control**	$94,000	
Soil & Water	$179,000	
Road Obliteration	$589,600	
Resource Monitoring	$127,380	
Administration/Misc	$2,420,220	
TOTAL	$7,919,000	($7,919,000)

Total revenues available less expense for operations	$3,537,763

*Acres identified for treatment from the current Clearwater Forest Management Plan.

**Noxious weed control has been doubled to address this increaseing problem

The potential Pilot Proforma assumes the North Fork, Lochsa, and Powell Ranger Districts' budgets to remain about the same and realizes that the Clearwater National Forest budget has shrunk by 7% since 1997. The road obliteration for this analysis uses the average cost of road obliteration. All district personnel and activities are to remain at the existing level or increase as revenues are generated through the pilot project period.

Revenue and Expense Summaries

Existing Proforma

Nez Perce National Forest
(Red River, Moose Creek, and Clearwater Ranger Districts)

Revenues generated from land management operations on the Nez Perce National Forest

1997-1999 Average Treatment Acres and Values

Timberland 1600 acres treated	$4,584,000	
Recreation Fees	$65,000	
Grazing fees	$5,326	
TOTAL	$4,654,326	$4,654,326

Expense for Operations1999-Elk City Selway Districts

Timberlands		
Fire	$3,028,000	
Planning	$448,800	
Timber Sales	$2,816,000	
Reforestation	$1,420,000	
Recreation	$969,280	
Minerals	$263,200	
Grazing	$272,000	
Heritage Resources	$116,800	
Wildlife	$654,507	
Noxious Weed Control	$60,000	
Soil & Water	$188,800	
Administration/Misc	$3,191,413	
TOTAL	$13,428,800	($13,428,800)

Total revenues available less expense for operations	($8,774,474)

Watershed restoration on the Nez Perce National Forest consists of road obliteration, road decommissioning, reconstruction, soil stabilization, and drainage improvement projects. These costs are included under the soil and water budget. Recreation fees and mineral income are minor on these districts.

Recently Elk City and Selway districts have been administratively combined with adjacent districts and the Elk City district is now part of Red River District, and the Selway is part of the Moose Creek District.

Potential Pilot Proforma

Red River, Moose Creek, and Clearwater Ranger Districts

Revenues generated from land management operations

PILOT Proforma

Timberland 6933 acres treated*	$19,864,000	
Recreation Fees	$65,000	
Minerals	---	
Grazing fees	$5,326	
TOTAL	$19,934,326	$19,934,326

Expense for Operations Elk City, Selway Districts 1999

Timberlands		
Fire	$3,028,000	
Planning	$448,800	
Timber Sales	$2,816,000	
Reforestation	$1,420,000	
Recreation	$969,280	
Minerals	$263,200	
Grazing	$272,000	
Heritage Resources	$116,800	
Wildlife	$654,507	
Noxious Weed Control**	$120,000	
Soil & Water	$188,800	
Resource Monitoring	$159,570	
Administration/Misc	$3,031,843	
TOTAL	$13,488,800	($13,488,800)

Total Revenues Available less cash used for operations	$6,445,526

*The Nez Perce National Forest Management Plan identifies 4,585 acres in regeneration harvest and 5,000 acres for wildlife habitat. Presently these activities are 60% below projected.

**The Nez Perce National Forest noxious weed control budget has been increasing for the past several years to address this problem that threatens our native plants and habitats. The budget has been doubled to address this issue.

The potential Pilot Proforma assumes the three districts' budgets are to remain about the same and no personnel changes are expected. Mineral and grazing fees are minimal on these districts.

Total Existing Revenue and Expense Summaries vs. Total Potential Pilot Revenues and Expense Summaries for the Clearwater and Nez Perce Project Areas

Existing Revenues and Expense Summaries

Revenues generated from Land Management Operations		
Clearwater National Forest	$1,800,763	
Nez Perce National Forest	$4,654,326	
Total	$6,455,089	
Expense for Operations		
Clearwater National Forest	$7,872,000	
Nez perce National Forest	$13,428,800	
Total	$21,300,800	
Total revenues available less expense for operations		**($14,845,711)**

Potential Pilot Revenue and Expense Summaries

Revenues generated from Land Management Operations		
Clearwater National Forest	$11,456,763	
Nez Perce National Forest	$19,934,326	
Total	$31,391,089	
Expense for Operations		
Clearwater National Forest	$7,919,000	
Nez Perce National Forest	$13,488,800	
Total	$21,407,800	
Total Revenues Available less Cash Used for Operations		**$9,983,289**

Comparisons

The potential treatment of 7,843 acres annually is projected from the Clearwater National Forest. An additional 988,000 acres of roadless forest are not presently being considered for management. This estimate of a treating 7,843 acres annually may not be sufficient to restore and improve the large number of acres that need attention. The potential acres to be treated bring the pilot project area into a positive cash situation. The Clearwater National Forest can maintain all the existing activities presently identified in the budget and have an opportunity to increase watershed restoration, wildlife habitat, soil and water projects, reforestation, heritage resources, and recreational needs. The revenues generated can be directed to the areas that need to be restored to early seral species. Activities needed include thinning overstocked areas and habitat improvement through prescribed burning that blend into the overall landscape themes and goal for each drainage.

The three Districts on the Nez Perce National Forest identify 6,933 acres to treat annually and involves both thinnings and wildlife habitat improvement. This is a target

based on the Nez Perce Management Plan. This conservative estimate of 6,933 acres will not likely address the mortality on the forest from insect, disease, and wildfire losses on the suitable acres available for restoration activities. Presently, the Nez Perce Forest is only completing 40% of the projected thinnings and wildlife habitat projects needed to restore and improve the habitats on the forest. The pilot project has not identified management activities for the 414,000 acres of roadless at this time. The collaborative group will enter into this discussion as management needs are required.

The comparisons identify that the management activities are not being completed within the Clearwater Basin Stewardship project area and are constrained by a limited budget. The districts continually want to do more but have less funding and more constraints. This pilot project with appropriate authorization is an opportunity to change how the Forest Service does business by improving the accomplishments and providing increased income and efficiency. A comparison of how well the pilot project conducts business will be an opportunity to evaluate the accomplishments in restoring, repairing, and improving the ecological needs of the forest. The accomplishments can be compared to adjacent forests and their results. The process will involve the public and includes the cooperation of resource professionals and the community to achieve a long-term goal of maintaining and protecting the ecological integrity of the landscape in a cost-efficient manner.

Management and Monitoring Strategies

Good forest stewardship is the ability to apply appropriate practices to retain the health of the forest and is responsive to social, economic, ecologic, and cultural conditions that exist for the forest ecosystem. The focus in ecosystem restoration is to use silvicultural treatments to roughly emulate historic disturbances such as fire hazard and forest pest problems, with timber production a by-product of these activities. This management strategy combined with good forest stewardship can be conducted in a manner that protects the environment, enhances recreational opportunities, and produces commodities for the local businesses and communities.

The Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative identifies 2,719,000 million acres of accessible and roadless area forest. The potential 14,776 acres to be treated is a conservative estimate and is not expected to be sufficient to take care of the mortality and forest health issues at this time. The treatment acres represent one half of one percent of the total acres in both National Forests. Under a treatment level of this size, impacts would be minimal and environmental concerns, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities can be enhanced with the increased revenues. The amount of restoration activities that can be completed at this treatment level will need to be assessed during the project. This treatment projection is based on the 1,317,000 acres identified by the Forest Service as manageable timberland outside the wilderness areas and does not include growth or mortality occurring in the roadless areas, which are estimated at an additional 1,402,000 acres within the pilot project. The estimate of the amount of harvest needed to restore and enhance the landscape is a question that needs to be identified by the collaborative group and documented in the 5-year plan. The conservative treatment

estimate allows for another comparison, which is to identify the appropriate levels of activity necessary to meet the long-term sustainability of these ecosystems.

Monitoring activities will begin with the collaborative group that will be on the ground to evaluate the benefits and improvements throughout the landscape. Accomplishments will be tracked, allowing for natural forest succession and how it differs from the management activities and the changes these activities make in the ecosystem. Questions to ask are: "Are we moving toward an ecologically sustainable condition?" and "How does this compare to neighboring forests which are under the existing management regimes?"

Economic Efficiency

The information used in the cost analysis is from the Forest Service's annual reports. Additionally, the cost of management on federal lands was also compared to the timber management costs researched and published by Professor Charles E. Keegan and Krista M. Gebert. Professor Keegan is with the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana, Missoula, MT, and Ms.Gebert is with the US Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Missoula, MT. The study evaluated the timber management costs associated with managing National Forest lands and includes most of the National Forest located in north Idaho and northwest Montana.

The cost of implementing management has skyrocketed due to the continuous review and appeals of groups that desire to halt or inhibit all forms of restoration or management activities. Streamlining the process requires all interested communities to participate in the planning and management of these lands. By choosing not to participate, these groups lose their opportunity to appeal. This will bring the interested groups to the table and enable the collaborative effort to move forward. The collaborative group will invest a tremendous amount of time and energy into this process, and to make it work on the ground will require honest cooperation. To consistently implement ecological improvements on an annual basis requires public participation and cooperation, which can improve the forest while providing a positive outlook to local communities.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Present management activities are far below the level of implementation to address the ecological needs of the forest. Through pre-commercial and commercial thinning, use of prescribed fire, and stream and road restoration, landscape-wide improvements can be made to maintain a healthy green forest, increase wildlife habitat, reduce wildfire losses, and protect our water resources. Our National Forest needs to treat more acres and direct management towards long-term ecosystem sustainability. It is undeniable that many natural resource advocates have come to rely on the federal process to ensure judicial scrutiny over federal agency decision-making to slow or stop resource extraction. The tremendous efforts of time, funds, and resources that go into the judicial review of federal decision-making can be more beneficial to our natural resources if these

energies were re-directed in a cooperative decision-making process that would serve our environment and public assets on a national and local level.

Our National Forests need attention, and the Forest Service as the stewards of the land need a new tool to do this business—a tool that is more cooperative and works on a larger scale. Looking at the entire ecosystem, how the plants, animals, and humans interact and how to provide for these needs on a sustainable basis is a goal that will require ongoing research, education, and leadership.

The public participation process should enrich, not paralyze, the implementation of environmentally sound practices. Monitoring the vegetation management, commodity outputs, and environmental consequences should direct forest planning and regulations. The plans should compare and contrast goals and outcomes of recent activities to other areas that are conducted using a different process. The collaborative process is one more tool to use to develop management activities and to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

This project was originally submitted by the Clearwater Elk Recovery Team and Save Elk City. Additionally, this project was further developed and modified with the participation and assistance of Northwest Management, Inc. and the Federal Lands Task Force Working Group.